

Carex pluriflora Hulten
several flowered sedge
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G4S1S2

General Description: A perennial sedge 4 to 24 in. (10 to 60 cm) tall. The lower most leaves are often much reduced with a short blade that is firm and pointed. The foliage leaves are borne farther up on the plant. Flowers are naked, borne in spikes, each subtended with a generally small and scarious bract or scale, bract subtending the lowest female spike $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (5 to 20 mm) in length, awn tipped, generally shorter than the subtended peduncle and always reaching below the spike; female scales black or nearly so, tending to wrap around the lower part of the perigynium; stamens three or occasionally two; perigynium glabrous, beakless, papillate, rarely approaching $\frac{1}{10}$ to $\frac{1}{5}$ in. (3 to $4\frac{1}{2}$ mm) in length. Plants have 2 to 3 quadrangular achenes.

Identification Tips: This species is most closely related to *Carex macrochaeta* and *C. paupercula* (both of which are rare in Washington). *Carex macrochaeta* has awn-tipped female scales, while *C. pluriflora* does not. *C. paupercula* has brown or straw-colored female scales, while *C. pluriflora* has black or very dark brown scales. The use of a technical key is required for identification.

Phenology: Flowers from June until mid August

Range: *C. pluriflora* occurs in Siberia and northern North America in British Columbia, Alaska, Oregon, and Washington, where it is peripheral in Clallam, Whatcom, and Snohomish counties.

Habitat: Habitat for the species includes wetlands, boggy lake margins, prairies, stream banks, and coastal inland areas. This species often grows in sphagnum and peaty soils in areas dominated by herbaceous plants. In Washington, populations range in elevation from 160 to 3160 feet (49 to 961 m).

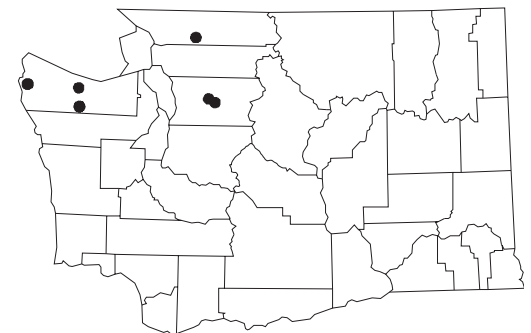
Ecology: Populations in coastal inland areas sometimes receive saltwater influence. Some populations in Washington are located in areas that are seasonally flooded. One Washington population is growing in an area that has been burned and grazed in the past, indicating that these activities may have played a role in shaping the habitat of this population.

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Known distribution
of *Carex pluriflora*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Photo by Linda Kunze



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State Status Comments: The limited range and number of Washington state populations account for the sensitive status of the species.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory in Washington is needed.

Threats and Management Concerns: Pollution and trampling by grazing animals are potential threats to this species. Additionally, recreational use in areas where *Carex pluriflora* grows may be quite high, thus contributing to habitat destruction.

Comments: The names *Carex stygia* and *Carex rariflora* var. *stygia* have been misapplied to this species in the past (Hitchcock 1973).

References:

Hitchcock, C.L. and A. Cronquist. 1973. *Flora of the Pacific Northwest*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 730 pp.